South Tyneside Council

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating and Call-in Committee Minutes

25 February 2026

Present: Councillors McCabe (Chair), Cunnigham, Hamilton, Keegan, K. Maxwell, Proudlock, Yare.

In attendance: Alan Foster (Head of Finance), Jennifer Milne (iTrent System and Process Manager), Aisling Crane – Bell (Senior Strategy and Policy Officer), Rory Sherwood – Parkin (Corporate Lead Officer Policy), Jonathan Lunness (Scrutiny and Democracy Support Officer), Emma Purvis (Senior Democracy Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Ford.

There was also one member of the public in attendance.

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1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026

Agreed: That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a true record.

3. Quarter 2 2025-26 Performance Report

A presentation was given on the Council's performance up to the end of September 2025. Members were advised that the report provided an update on progress against the Council's 20-Year Vision and 3-Year Strategy. The performance report summarised performance across the five Council ambitions.

It was reported that strong performance had continued in several areas, including reductions in referrals to Children's Social Care, lower rates of Child Protection Plans, improved stability for children, high care provider quality ratings, increased leisure centre memberships, reduced anti-social behaviour, and improved recycling rates.

Members were informed that areas of concern included increases in repeat Child Protection Plans within two years, high domestic abuse rates, rising homelessness presentations, low employment levels, high economic inactivity, benefit claimant levels (particularly among 18–21-year-olds), and slow progress on repairs and housing inspections in some cases.

The Committee noted that projects across children's services, adult social care, homelessness prevention, regeneration and environmental sustainability were progressing, with several major schemes underway, including new Children's Homes, Extra Care developments, College relocation, and the Stronger Shores programme.

It was also reported that the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 ranked South Tyneside as the 35th most deprived authority, with significant challenges in employment, health and income deprivation. Members were advised that wide-ranging engagement activity and consultation continued across the borough, supporting work across all Ambitions.

It was thought that the report could be useful to the Committee for informing future work programmes.

A Member complimented the breadth of the report and asked if any guidance had been provided by DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) as to when universal credit payments would stabilise. It was answered that DWP colleagues attended the meetings of the Poverty Group and were providing regular updates.

The Member also asked if average differentials were considered and the Officer acknowledged this was a good idea as some figures could change significantly depending on the time of year. For example, NEET (not in education, employment or training) figures would increase at the conclusion of the academic year as young people were looking towards their next destination.

A Member asked whether the Borough's extra care facilities were effective relief and whether they were reaching capacity. The Officer noted that these facilities were designed to help support people return to their own homes but would provide further information. A Member praised these facilities as they provided an excellent wrap around service, however they suggested access could be better.

A Member asked what the first point of contact would be when seeking support for victims of domestic abuse. It was confirmed that this would be the Restart service.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

4. Oracle Replacement Project

Members received a presentation which gave detail around the new iTrent and Technology One systems which were set to replace the Council's current Oracle system.

The background to the programme was outlined and Members were advised that the work had begun in 2023 under the Modern, Fit for Purpose Council transformation workstream. Oracle, the existing HR, payroll, finance and procurement system, was ageing and was not expected to function effectively beyond 2027. Through a procurement process, two "best of breed" systems had been selected and were supported by an external review.

The iTrent contract had been awarded in June 2024 and the TechnologyOne contract in January 2025. Initial go-live dates had been revised in order to allow more thorough testing and colleague engagement.

Members were informed that iTrent would provide enhanced employee and manager self-service and would ensure more secure and accessible people data. The system would support improved reporting, analytics, and modernised HR and payroll processes.

Progress to date had included completion of core system testing in January 2026, recruitment of a system support team, extraction and loading of data from Oracle, and payroll parallel runs during February and March. Engagement and training activity had been ongoing, with training resources available from March. the go-live for iTrent remained scheduled for April 2026.

TechnologyOne would deliver full visibility of financial information, improved processes, and better self-service for budget holders. The system, based on modern hosted infrastructure, would support the Council's long-term aims.

The implementation timeline had been moved from April 2026 to Autumn 2026 to allow further testing and engagement. A systems administration support team had been recruited and data migration work was underway. Engagement and training activity was expected to increase following the iTrent go-live.

Members were advised that both implementations formed part of a significant organisational change programme. iTrent would be used by all employees and elected members, with TechnologyOne used by a smaller but important group. Focus groups and user testing had informed training requirements and training plans would take account of staff without Council devices, school-based staff and elected members.

The Committee was updated on the governance arrangements, which included bi-monthly updates to the Transformation Board, reporting to the People and Organisational Development Committee, weekly implementation team meetings, fortnightly service governance meetings, and monthly Project Boards for both systems.

Estimated capital spend for the programme was reported at £3.5m, covering consultancy and internal staffing. It was noted that the initial budget had been set at £10m so the project had cost significantly less than anticipated. The Annual revenue costs were estimated at £350k for system licensing, which was slightly higher than Oracle but had been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan. Ongoing support teams would contribute to future efficiencies.

In summary, officers stated that the system replacements represented major technological and cultural change. Implementation timelines had been extended to accommodate comprehensive testing. Significant organisational engagement and training would be required. Realisation of both cashable and non-cashable benefits would be tracked following implementation.

A discussion was had around payroll testing as a practice run had been made alongside the regular payment system to track all the necessary calculations. Some issues had arisen, however a consultant from iTrent would be on site for three days to help run through the reports and make any changes. Officers assured that iTrent was still on track to go live in April and assured that all necessary measures would be in place to ensure everyone would be paid correctly and on time.

A Member asked when all of the contracted functionality would be available for both systems. It was confirmed that all essential functions would be available from the start, however any other desirables may come later.

It was also added that iTrent training modules were being embedded within the HR training schedule and the systems had been staggered to ensure training did not need to overlap.

A Member asked for clarification around the projects budget and it was confirmed that this derived from borrowing and reserves. It was noted that the reduced budget did not necessarily mean more money was available, but less money would be borrowed or taken from reserves.

A Member asked if paper payslips would still be available and it was confirmed that they would be in some specific circumstances, but as a general rule they would all be online.

A Member asked what assurances had been made around cybercrime. The Council's ICT teams had verified that the systems were secure and staff would be able to log on using their Council log in, which was secured with multi-factor authentication.

The Chair noted that both systems seemed more up to date, functional and cost effective. He deemed the change necessary and complimented officers on its implementation.

Agreed: That the presentation be noted.

5. Work Programme 2025-26

Jonathan Lunness, Scrutiny and Democracy Support Officer, outlined the work programme for the committee, as well as the work programmes for all the Council's scrutiny committees. This was to give the Overview and Scrutiny Committee oversight of the scrutiny process, as per its terms of reference.

As this was the last meeting if the municipal year Members were invited to put forward suggestions for the next year's work programme.

It was suggested that the Committee look at the Council's Standards Committee and the complaints process. Advice was provided subsequent to the meeting that it was not this Committee's constitutional or legal role to review this topic.

Agreed: That the work programme be agreed as presented.

6. Chair's Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.